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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: DPM ISSAWI TO DEPUTY SECRETARY: "IRAQI DEMOCRACY  
IS AT RISK"

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) On October 6, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte met with Deputy Prime Minister for Essential Services Rafae Issawi in the DPM's Residence. Ambassador Marc Wall, Coordinator for Economic Transition in Iraq, and Sunni Tawafaq parliamentarians Salman al-Jumaili and Dhafer al-Ani also attended the meeting.

12. (C) Deputy Prime Minister Issawi warned the Deputy Secretary of a "dangerous" consolidation of power by Prime Minister Maliki and his Shi'a backers. He said the GOI was failing to incorporate Sons of Iraq into the security forces or civilian life, a trend that could turn them against the government. The Deputy Secretary encouraged more Sunni participation in the 2009 elections than had been the case in 2005, and stressed the need for reconstruction progress to keep up with security gains. End Summary.

DPM: IRAQ CONTROLLED BY "ONE MAN, ONE PARTY"

13. (C) DPM Issawi - a Sunni Arab - started the conversation by warning the Deputy Secretary of a "dangerous" consolidation of power taking place in Iraq. All key matters - security, oil, trade, finance - are controlled by "one man, one party," he explained, singling out Prime Minister Maliki and ISCI (Note: PM is a member of Da'wa party. End Note). Declaring "democracy is at risk," Issawi said politicians throughout the provinces, especially the KRG, are under the false impression they are part of the decision-making process. He blamed overconfidence among the Shi'a Arab political elite and a policy of sectarian marginalization as the root causes of this problem. As an example, Issawi recalled when during a trip to Mosul, the Iraqi Army (IA) commander recommended recruiting from the local population. Issawi recounted, however, that the PM was dismissive when he raised the issue. "The Prime Minister said there are already 6,000 soldiers from Mosul - this was enough," he explained. Meanwhile, Issawi said, 15 out of 17 of the Ministry of Defense's most senior officials are Shi'a Arabs. He also highlighted a new draft law in the Council of Representatives that would shift approving authority for army generals from the President to the Prime Minister.

DPM ON SONS OF IRAQ

14. (C) Issawi complained the GOI was failing to incorporate Sons of Iraq (SOI) into the security forces or civilian jobs, and said this could eventually turn them against the Iraqi government. He said the problem was most disconcerting in Diyalah and Baghdad. Blaming a "decision made in Iran," Issawi said one month ago the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) began arresting key SOI leaders and foot soldiers, forcing many to flee Iraq. He alleged advisers to the PM continue to assert that SOI are affiliated with Al-Qaeda and

anti-government Sunni insurgents. When the Deputy Secretary asked Issawi how to best handle the SOIs, Issawi replied the GOI needed to form a "multi-sectarian" committee to first identify qualified SOI for absorption into Iraqi Police (IP).

Issawi stated the GOI then needed to facilitate "permanent" civilian employment for those not qualified to enter the security forces. "The current policy is very bad," he said, "And it will leave scars in their hearts and turn them against the government." When the Deputy Secretary pointed out greater success with absorbing SOI in Anbar province, Issawi - himself from Anbar - conceded it was easier to deal with the SOI issue in "homogeneous" provinces (Comment: Issawi has previously suggested that the GOI should absorb all 100,000 SOI into either the IA or IP, in order to balance Shi'a and Kurd numbers in both. End Comment.)

#### RECONSTRUCTION

15. (C) The Deputy Secretary stressed the importance of reconstruction, sharing his observations that gains in security have generally not been matched by progress in the delivery of essential services. The Deputy Secretary recounted his visit to Ramadi, where markets were bustling, but roads and buildings remained in extremely poor condition.

He underscored the importance of a more aggressive GOI push for reconstruction, and the need to do so now while Iraq was enjoying windfall oil revenue. Issawi said Iraq's legacy of central planning and the post-2003 brain drain was responsible for lack of reconstruction project execution. He furthermore blamed line ministers, stating many were incapable, stymied by bureaucracies, or harboring sectarian

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motives, adding that an "Iranian style" of governance by procrastination permeated the GOI. He also said the private sector was not sufficiently developing outside the KRG.

#### PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

16. (C) Tawafuq parliamentarian Dhafer al-Ani complained the Shi'a-dominated government was pushing religious leaders as candidates for the upcoming provincial elections, and the Deputy Secretary encouraged more Sunni participation in elections. In response to the parliamentarians' concerns over Iranian influence and further sectarian marginalization, the Deputy Secretary reminded the group that many Sunni, especially in the west, boycotted the last round of elections. He said the level of Sunni participation in the future of Iraq would be strongly related to their voter turnout. Ani acknowledged this, promising, "This time, we will be part of the election...all over Iraq, not just in Sunni majority areas."

#### COMMENT

17. (C) Issawi was clearly intent on keeping the conversation focused on his complaints of Shia consolidation of power, rather than discussing essential services - his mandate. Even when the Deputy Secretary steered the conversation towards a frank exchange of ideas on reconstruction, Issawi would return to the subject of sectarianism, Iranian influence, and SOIs. Issawi's complaints reflect other conversations we have had with him. They also demonstrate, however, his firm belief that a failure by the GOI to address these issues will result in security lapses that can insurmountably obstruct his efforts to improve essential services throughout Iraq. End Comment.

18. (U) DepSec staff has cleared this cable.  
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